

Duxbury once had several small industries. Did you ever hear of the "pogie factory"? It was where fish were reduced to fertilizer, and was operated at the foot of Captain's Hill by the Standard Fertilizer Company. There were many complaints because of the odor and finally the factory was closed, although the town expressed its opposition to the business in 1885. Now there are impressive new houses near the site.

Farming and shipbuilding were for a long time the major industries. The last full-rigged Duxbury-built ship was the Samuel G. Reed, launched by N. Porter Keen in 1869. The Keen farm was on Keen St. and the old house and barn, the largest ever built in Duxbury, are still standing and are part of Camp Wing, the summer camp for the Boys' Club of Boston.

After the prosperous days of ship-building were over, Duxbury turned to many small industries. In 1837 some 50 fishing boats were making regular trips to the Georges and Grand Banks. The catch was mostly cod and mackerel. Salt cod was packed in boxes and mackerel, in barrels. Much of it was sent to the West Indies and Europe.

Boots and shoes were made in small one-room shops located in the dooryards of the homes of their owners. Some of these tiny shops can be seen today, especially in Tinkertown, a center of shoemaking. In 1837 Duxbury shoe shops produced more than 42,000 pairs of shoes and 1,000 pairs of boots. Often men who had been to sea made shoes during the winter months.

During the War of 1812 when the British blockade shut off the supply of sail-cloth required by Duxbury ship-builders, the Weston firm organized the Duxbury Woolen and Linen Company. Milling began in 1640 when a grist mill was built on the stream called Mill Brook.

In Tinkertown there were several shops where tin-smiths made lanterns, lamps, funnels and kitchen-ware. For a time carriages and wagons were made. The Indians introduced the early settlers to Duxbury clams that were so plentiful that piles of the shells were left on the shore. These were used in road building.

The Indians also introduced the colonists to cranberries for food and medicine. The first bogs were owned by John S. Loring and Joseph Weston. Sometimes cranberries were raised just to attract the birds.

At first cranberries were picked by hand, but later, scoops were used. Now cranberries are big business. Even the advertisements for "Southscape," Duxbury's luxury condominiums, use as one of their selling points: "Overlooking a cranberry bog."

Nowadays, small businesses in Duxbury are frowned upon, but it took them to take the place of ship-building. Yankee ingenuity is to be thanked for bringing the town out of the doldrums into one of the most attractive and prosperous towns in the state.

Business and industry

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Alison Arnold Writes...

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